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SUBJECT: KIRKUK GOVERNOR SURVIVES ATTACK, LAYS OUT PRIORITIES

Sensitive but unclassified; please handle accordingly.

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Kirkuk Governor Mustafa survived a human bomb attack on his car November 28. This was the first time this tactic had been used in Kirkuk. Mustafa was pessimistic that the provisions of Constitutional Article 140 on the final status of Kirkuk would be completed on schedule. Stronger support from the Prime Minister was needed to spur progress. Mustafa thought U.S. force deployment in the area should be robust during Article 140 implementation. Mustafa next will visit Baghdad 14-15 December in a trip coordinated by PRT-Kirkuk. Mustafa's determined response to the bomb attack is likely to benefit the Provincial Government's public standing. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) At about 0800 November 28, Kirkuk Provincial Governor Mustafa survived a suicide attack on his motorcade. Mustafa was in his armored sedan when his convoy passed a congested area adjacent to a construction site in downtown Kirkuk. A suicide bomber wearing a booby-trapped vest waited in the crowd and jumped on the windshield of the car, detonating himself. Exact casualty figures remain unclear, but the explosion killed at least one of Mustafa's PSDs and seriously wounded 18 others. The Governor escaped injury, although his car was completely destroyed. U.S. security experts here note that this is the first time a bomber attacked a convoy in this manner in Kirkuk. This was the second attempt on the Governor this month.

¶3. (U) Despite the attack, the Governor continued to his office at the Kirkuk Governorate Building. He immediately went on local television, expressing concern for those killed or wounded in the blast and indicated his determination not to let the attack deter him from his duties. He then worked a full day. Just hours from the attack, Gov. Mustafa met with U.S. officials (incl. 7th ID CDR MG Mixon, BG Bednarek, PRT Leader and REO Director) at a scheduled meeting to exchange views on security. MG Mixon laid out a security plan for judges as a pillar of Rule of Law strategy. Meanwhile, Governor Mustafa said the recent attack on the Kirkuk gasworks caused a local energy shortage, but it could be met with Iraqi militaryv (IA) stockpiles. More broadly, he would like to work with the U.S. to implement better defenses for strategic infrastructure.

¶4. (SBU) MG Mixon said that all should work with IA commanders to address these goals, noting that by the end of next year there should be fewer coalition forces in the area. Mustafa said reducing U.S. troops in the area was a bad idea. If anything, there should be more of a U.S. military presence given the uncertainties of Article 140 implementation. Asked if he thought a vote on Kirkuk's final status would occur as planned, Mustafa said he was pessimistic. Active and public support for full implementation needed to come from the Prime Minister for any real progress, he said. There was no movement on other, long standing issues raised during the discussion-- on plans to issue weapons permits, nor on fielding more local police.

¶5. (SBU) In closing, Mustafa observed that the U.S.-supplied armored vehicle that had just saved his life was the only one in his Governate's inventory. He asked directly if the U.S. could give him another. MG Mixon and his staff doubted any were available locally. Gov. Mustafa and Mixon will follow up on a scheme for regular secure travel to Baghdad for Kirkuk provincial senior staff, and Mustafa confirmed his own PRT-coordinated travel to the capital 15-16 December to meet with the Ministries of Housing, Oil, Water and Finance.

¶6. (SBU) COMMENT: The Governor's response to the attack, immediately broadcasting to the Province and then continuing with his work day, was an impressive performance that will contribute to public confidence in the Provincial Government. With two attacks against him just in the last four weeks, it seems likely that he will continue to be targeted. Replacement of his armored vehicle should be a high USG priority.

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